

HEAVY STUFF

issue 5

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the discussion and debating forum
of the Class War Federation

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we're back, were bad... WE'RE QUARTERLY

The Heavy Stuff is the theoretical magazine of the Class War Federation. Our politics are not rigid dogma and so the articles in here are not written by a single person or ruling clique. They are the ideas of our ordinary members and are constantly open to discussion. Only through this discussion and debate do we believe we can develop the finer details of our politics which are based on the following broad principles.

- *WE BELIEVE this society is divided into classes based on power and wealth. The ruling class, who are supported by the middle class; and the working class. Such a society is the cause of all the problems experienced by working class people the whole world over. This can only be sorted out by the destruction of the ruling class by the working class. This is class war.*
- *REAL CHANGE can only come about by working class people organising themselves to deal with the problems that they experience; using direct action against the institutions and individuals that cause them. There is no alternative. Violence is a necessary part of the class war - but as mass class violence, out in the open, not elitist terrorist actions.*
- *CLASS SOCIETY creates other oppressions based on sex, ethnic origin, disability, sexuality and the like. To the ruling class, this justifies extreme exploitation of people placed in such groups and divides our class. The class war must fight all these divisive oppressions, on all fronts.*
- *ABOVE ALL the Class War Federation believes that politics is life and life is politics. We reject the boring character of the so-called revolutionary left. Politics must be fun; it's a part of everyday life and must be able to take the piss out of itself.*

The aim of the Class War Federation is not to lead, but to increase the militancy of working class people's attempts to solve their problems; through propaganda, active participation and debate as equals.

In order to maximise this debate, we would like to break down the distinction between the writer and the readers and therefore welcome all contributions to the Heavy Stuff in whatever form. From this issue the Heavy Stuff will be going quarterly and issue six will be out in the Autumn.

This issue went to press
10 July 1992.

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FEELING BLUE IN '92

The United Europe of 1992 is an important issue for working class people.

It will fundamentally change the political and economic face of Europe. The United Europe is about the control, exploitation and manipulation of the working class. We ignore it at our peril.

By KL, Edinburgh Class War

THE United Europe of 1992 is in many ways only a symbolic dateline. But the hype over its symbolism belies something much more potentially dangerous than a 'Europe open for business', or a strengthened Brussels or Strasbourg.

1992 is a formal and constitutional pact to strengthen and support European capital against its Japanese and North American competitors. It is a formal economic, political (and increasingly military) union. For working class people its implications are wide ranging and largely hostile. It is a Europe for the bosses, by the bosses; a fortress Europe for those on the inside and the outside.

Through legal and official means the European Community (EC) will become a Europe for the Europeans. Those people judged not to be of 'European origin' will face increased racism - both legal and illegal, the constant threat of forced re-patriation, and no entry to the EC regardless of family or marital contacts there. Already the response from EC States to racist and neo-nazi attacks, has been to blame the victims, increase their own racism, and develop new methods of social control and repression.

• In Brussels they have discussed compulsory ID cards for black and Asian people to help them prove they are EC citizens.

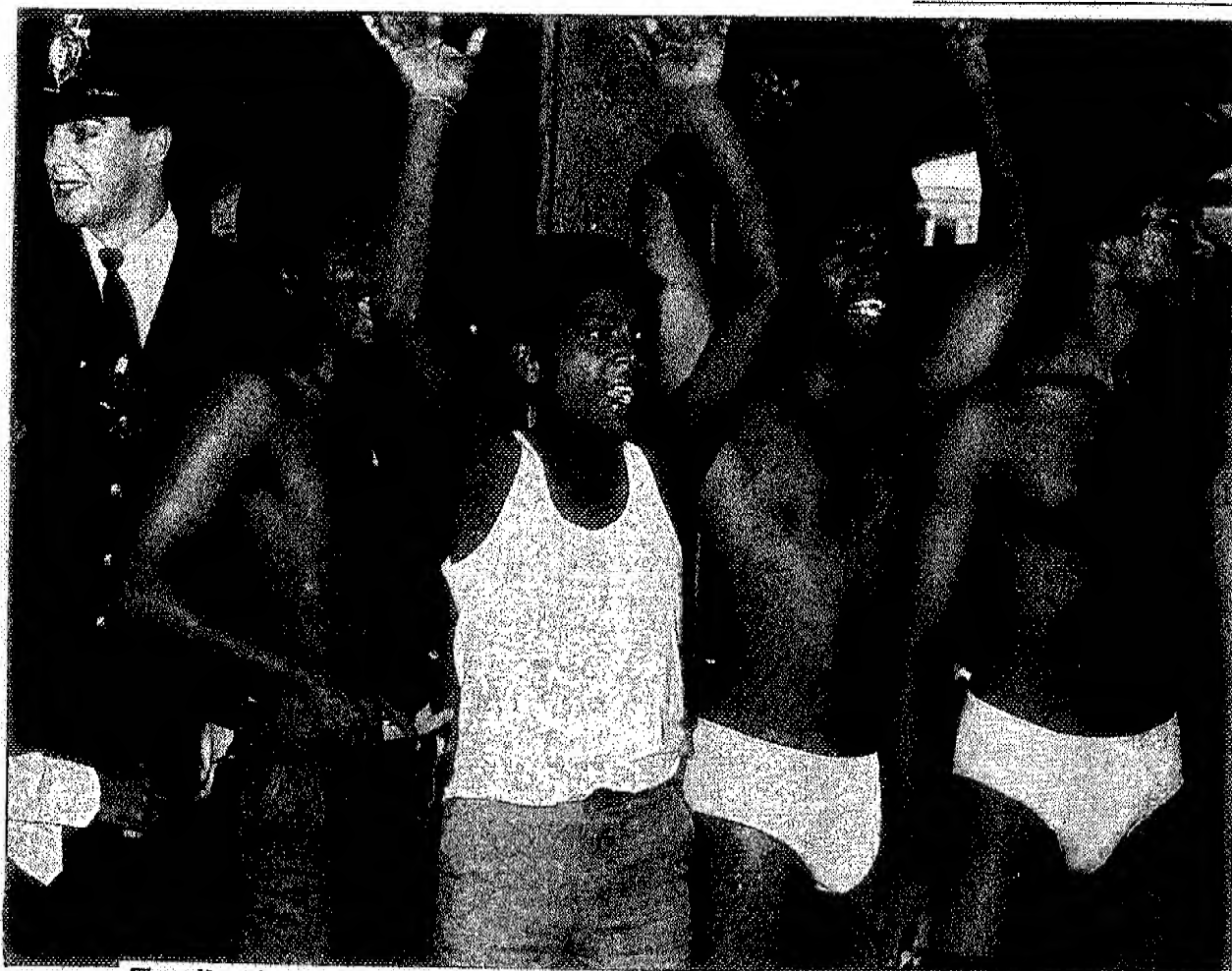
• In France the National Front have proposed an identical ID card scheme.

• In October a UK wide Police Federation conference near Edinburgh proposed a national ID card scheme for everyone - 'to help fight crime'.

Using current technology compulsory ID cards would help the state to monitor and control the movements of literally millions of people. In Britain the police already set up random road blocks to conduct 'censuses'. Over the festive period they stopped almost 100,000 people as part of a crackdown on drunk driving. Less than 3000 people were actually charged with drunk driving. What was the real aim of their exercise? Was it to get people used to the idea of being regularly stopped by the pigs? A compulsory ID scheme would mean less freedom of movement inside a country never mind outside of it.

Already, the response from EC States to racist and neo-nazi attacks, has been to blame the victims, increase their own racism, and develop new methods of social control and repression.





Tamil refugees stopped at Heathrow airport by racist immigration controls

This fortress Europe is not a 'maybe' or a 'perhaps'. It is already a reality for millions of people. There is a French law which enables forced re-patriation of 'foreigners' for even minor criminal convictions. In Germany, Turkish, Chinese and Vietnamese 'guest workers' are deported in their thousands. The German government also hope to overturn their 1949 constitution guaranteeing the right of asylum. And, as reported in Class War 51, the British government are also trying to abolish the right of asylum. Far from being at odds with a freedom and peace loving EC with rights for all minorities, laws like these lie at the very heart of the United Europe of the 1990s.

Internally, 1992 will enable capitalism to move around and control large amounts of labour and capital. In theory this would encourage more contact between working class people, and all the revolutionary potential this entails. But this threat has already been noted by our Euro bosses who have an active interest in keeping out the unruly, the undesirable and the organised. A mobile and uncontrolled population is not only dangerous to their profits, it's dangerous to their existence.

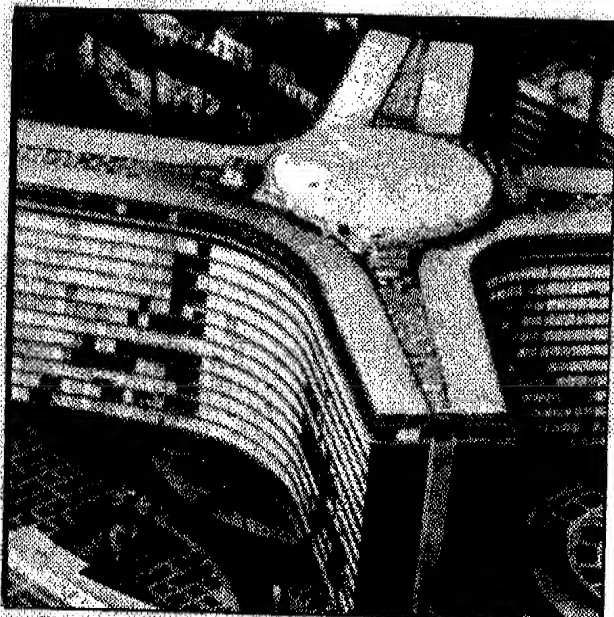
The new coordinated EC model passport was one step to rectify this problem. Others included the formalising of the once unofficial 'TREVI' group. TREVI exists to monitor and control their self made lists of political activists, 'criminals' and 'terrorists'. They do so by supplying these vast lists to the various security services - including national police and customs computers. So, if

your local plods have you filed as a potential criminal terrorist political subversive type, by the time you go to Spain on your holidays, thanks to TREVI, you may have become officially undesirable! The TREVI group itself is made up of police chiefs and interior ministers who, functioning as TREVI, were up to their dirty work years before TREVI even became official or legal.

A mobile and uncontrolled population is not only dangerous to their profits, it's dangerous to their existence.

The harmonising of member states' laws will largely be a case of the 'worst of the bad'. High on the agenda of past EC summits has been the desire to coordinate anti terrorist legislation. Too often yesterday's drastic measures end up as tomorrow's run of the mill laws. Repressive laws like Germany's 'anti terrorist' Article 128, Britains Clause 25 and Clause 28, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act will become adopted and standardised throughout the EC. Following German re-unification one of the first actions of Bonn was to repeal East Germany's relatively liberal abortion rights.

Workers face the situation of having to compete in a hugely expanded labour market with fewer rights and in poorer conditions. Capitalist economics will mean that



The EC building in Brussels, but just like Westminster, the real power lies elsewhere.

those enterprises with the lowest wages and poorest health and safety will become the most 'competitive'.

Leaving aside the question of the Danish 'NO' vote in their Maastricht referendum; the introduction of the single European market in 1993 will see the biggest restructuring of capitalism in Europe for fifty years. This structural adjustment, like those imposed on developing countries by the IMF and the world bank, could result in massive unemployment, cuts in public services and untold misery for millions of working class people across Europe.

At the moment bosses already threaten to import temporary workers from outside the EC; to do the job at half the pay in twice as bad conditions. A whole section of the unskilled, manual, low paid labour markets on continental Europe have become dominated by cheap, unorganised, expendable labour from outside the EC; largely from North Africa, Turkey and now also Eastern Europe. As workers blame each other for their situation and let racism and nationalism divide them, the bosses are laughing all the way to the bank.

The 'Social Charter' Britain found so objectionable at the Maastricht conference was hardly worth the paper it was written on. The Social Charter was designed to placate liberal concerns that the United Europe was only for the bosses and to convince social democratic unions that workers would also benefit from a United Europe. Most of its main points like paid holidays, and a maximum number of hours in a working week, already exist in other EC countries and the only country besides Britain not to have a minimum wage is Ireland. The fact that both liberals and social democratic unions were happy with such great concessions for workers like a 48 hour working week shows just how cheap their loyalty to the bosses comes. It is worth noting that the Social Charter had little to say about the unemployed and unwaged.

In the long term the structure and composition of the European ruling classes will change. The 'British' ruling class, being on the edge of Europe, and with one of the oldest and most blatant class systems in the world, will probably lose more than most. Perhaps this is why they were so split during Maastricht, and are still split over the issue of 1992 which some of them, like the Bruges Group, see as a threat to *their sovereignty*.

This threat to their sovereignty may be as internal as it is external. Local, would-be ruling classes, (like in Scotland, and Catalonia) are increasingly pushing for independence from their existing ruling classes. In Britain this could lead to the break up of the Unionist state; this in itself is good for the working class. At its most basic it gives the working class everywhere the opportunity to challenge their own ruling class's 'right' to rule.

This scenario is very much different from the 'Europe of the Regions' idea of the Scottish National Party and other EC apologists. They want to see people working hand in hand with the bosses, towards the illusion of 'national prosperity'. On the other hand, working class action can keep these new developing ruling classes on the run - without a moments rest and without an iota of support for their pro-NATO, pro-EC, pro-nuclear power States.

As ruling classes are forced to compete in the enclosed environment of fortress Europe, they too may begin to show their cracks and splits. This is when they are at their weakest, but also when they may be at their most ruthless.

If a United Europe is unavoidable, it at least offers the potential to develop a European working class with a genuine internationalist outlook. This need to develop an international strategy of action and ideas is vital. More than ever the struggles of other workers within Europe really will be our struggles. Issues of civil liberties, asylum, and of fighting racism, deportation and criminalisation of working class resistance, will become central to opposing the Europe of the Bosses and the idea of a Europe of the Europeans.

We still have the power to make the history of the future, we should start doing it now!



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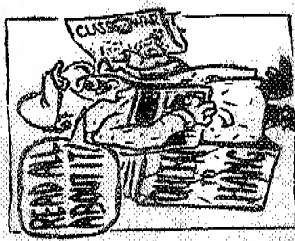
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A NON-FRESHERS GUIDE TO OXFORD

THE UNIVERSITY, THE CAR FACTORY AND THE WORKING CLASS

By Oxford Class War

SOME months ago the world was surprised to discover that Oxford has a working class, council estates, no-go areas and joy riders. The City of Dreaming Spires that had supplied the world's establishment with tyrants, fascists, Marxist/Leninists and an intellectualised bourgeoisie has been a facade for a class war that has been waged for hundreds of years. Bit over the top? Exaggeration? Let an Oxford Resident guide you through the darker side of Oxford's past and present.

This article first appeared in Leisure: PO Box 368 Cardiff, CF2 1SQ.

AT its very outset Oxford University was established to tie together the hegemony that would run dear old Albion for ever more. In Oxford, science, religion and the aristocracy pooled their resources to deepen, mystify and finance their power. Let us not forget their resources were the products of forced economic systems of serfdom, land ownership and physical coercion.

Slowly, as the centuries ground on, Oxford (and to a lesser extent Cambridge) became an exclusive playground for the establishment to arrange the social order under capitalism not only in Britain but right across the Planet.

Meanwhile the working people of Oxford, whose presence was permitted only to facilitate all this cerebral masturbation, began to evolve. Scouts (cleaners), servants, maids, apprentices, shopworkers, carpenters, cobblers, tailors were massed together in squalid corners of the town. Areas

Whenever the poor of Oxford got together in a recreational mode and got pissed the resulting riots were legendary, the market in St Giles being a favourite starting point

such as St Clement's, Jericho and Osney, became synonymous with Oxford's poor. During the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, just spitting distance from the colleges, Oxford's poor suffered from plagues of cholera, poxes, leprosy and typhus. Women were driven to prostitution to serve the sexual appetites of the Gents in the Colleges.

Whenever the poor of Oxford got together in a recreational mode and got pissed the resulting riots were legendary, the market in St Giles being a favourite starting point. Students were often beaten and sometimes murdered by the 'Townies'.



Residents in Blackbird Leys didn't take kindly to their area being over-run by masked, tooled up gangs from outside the area.

BY THE mid-19th century the relations between the working class and colleges of Oxford became commonly known as Town and Gown. On 1st May every year at 6 o'clock in the morning, 'Townies' would descend on the colleges to chuck what students they could find in the River - after an obligatory slapping of course.

The problems and pressures this conflict created in the city, added to the possibility of the squalor and disease permeating the sacrosanct colleges who were looking to expand, led to the City authorities moving the problem out of the City. In the eyes of the authorities, the problem was the poor, not the colleges.

The 20th century saw Oxford's poor relocated outside the city in estates constructed on the outskirts of the town. The houses closest to the town were all occupied by bursars, dons and students, the new council estates were put beyond these residences, a mile or two walk to the town for their work.

In one famous instance a council estate was built in North Oxford, and in order to prevent the working class from using their road to come and go to the town, the middle classes in their huge detached houses built a 6 foot brick wall across the road, preventing access to the people from the council estate. The infamous Cutteslowe Wall stood for seven years before it was knocked down by a tank driven by soldiers recruited from Oxford's Townies.

Other estates were built during the 1930s and 40s at sights like Rose Hill and Donnington Bridge. All of these estates were on the periphery of Oxford's middle class. The dons and bursars could go backwards and forwards to their work at the colleges without being reminded that workers also lived in Oxford.

The Cowley car works offered employment to people from all over the south of England, Wales and the Commonwealth, after the 2nd World War workers came in their tens of



The racist elements in some communities also got their comeuppance in the riots.

thousands. To house this influx of workers old estates were expanded. New Estates were constructed in the late 50s and 60s, and even further away from the colleges. Barton, Berinsfield (called Dodge City because of its Wild West reputation, all of the 'problem' families were moved out of the Oxford area to this estate, (which is 6 miles out of the town), and the now famous Blackbird Leys.

Blackbird Leys sits on top of the car factory, almost everyone on the estate over the age of 25 has worked in this stinking, back breaking, demoralising hole. Its filth is pumped out of chimneys to settle on the estate, blobs of paint from the paintshop spotted cars and washing alike. One good thing came out of the factory for the residents of Blackbird Leys, that

was a strong political sense of solidarity and autonomy on the estate. Racial conflict was/is almost unheard of, racists that attempt to divide the community were often identified when unity in strike action and pickets were called for. As scabs were often racist too, they were easily identified and easily dealt with, both inside and outside the factory. Solidarity on the estate grew from proletarianization that was developed in the factory, added to this was the fact that two or sometimes three generations of the same family worked in the factory and lived in Blackbird Leys. This is a tight community, reciprocal strands of loyalty and support permeate the whole estate. Everyone knows someone who knows someone and so on. They went to school together and now their children go to school to-

gether, even the nurturing of the young of Blackbird Leys was socially confined to the schools on the estate.

The kids on the estate grew up with the car factory up the road as a symbol of their future, many would end up working in 'the factory' assembling cars. By pooling experience and information, groups would specialise in getting you a radio or a new battery, spray paint and so on out of the factory. Some workers were even trained by the company to break into cars without damaging them...all this information was pooled. The company slowed its recruitment down to nothing about six or seven years ago and the kids would break into the new car compounds at night and joyride the cars around these huge fields, often chased by Security Guards. In one incident two workers INSIDE THE FACTORY (not kids from the estate) were seriously injured in their lunch hour joy-riding MG Montegos around car parks. Radios, cassettes and tyres, and sometimes whole panels were robbed by the kids from the estate from these compounds. The company stopped that by putting infra-red night cameras up with a direct link to the local nick. The car then became a symbol of the local source of income and if it offered no income, it was used as a tool of ridicule.

In the last three or four years posses have emerged all around Oxford, they're multi-racial, sussed and sharp, stealing high powered cars is the symbol of their nexus, they come together on any night of the week to do handbrake turns at about 100mph and so on in front of crowds just coming out of the pubs at 11pm. Why buy a video and go home when you can eat your Chinese takeaway or fish and chips while sitting on a wall with your mates watching someone pretending to be Steve McQueen or Eddie Murphy? Joints are passed around and cans of beer opened, the empties are lobbed at passing police cars, a kind of community recycling - cans to weapons - the police eventually became powerless to intervene.

About 18 months ago because the monitoring technology used by the posses became so sophisticated they

knew well in advance what the police were up to - occasionally moving venues to another estate if they suspected a police crackdown. The scanners they used to monitor the police were stolen from shops in Oxford as were their ReeBoks and French Connection clothes. They found themselves excluded from the University and its facilities for young people, unwanted by local employers, untrained and pitifully short of cash; the Community facilities were built for workers with cash, not for penniless young people with nothing to do.

Split the solidarity of the community and the police can then take sides, thereby justifying more intervention and police action on the estate.

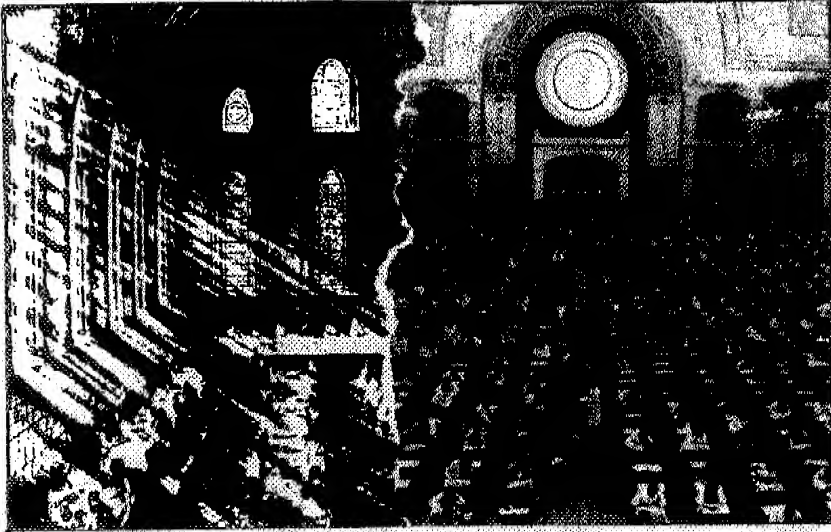
So prevented from working on cars they took to stealing them instead. Many were stolen and then stashed in garages for weeks, brought out to be driven madly all over Oxford. Blackbird Leys is not the only estate or area affected by joy riders in Oxford, but for some reason the police have concentrated their attention to this close and closed community, often to the point of absurdity.

Two years ago the police launched a series of dawn raids all over the estates of Oxford. The purpose of this was to 'smash a car stealing ring'. The police declared to the local press that they had smashed a major car theft gang 'Centred in Blackbird Leys'. The outcome was only two prosecutions one for a bent MOT and false number plate, the other for a false Log Book...hardly major, hardly anything really.

The same thing happened four years ago on a 'major drug bust' on a pub in the estate...only grams of hash were discovered and only three people arrested. No kilos of heroin or crack, hardly a big drug problem. The police have had a real problem in policing such a tight community, with only two pubs on an estate where everyone knows everyone else the old bill, and strangers, stick out like sore thumbs. The social solidarity in Blackbird Leys meant the only method the police had of dealing with crime was not the 'softly softly' approach but more the heavy hand of dawn raid and riot squad hoping they would catch something worthwhile.

It is hardly surprising that a car culture exists in an estate like Blackbird Leys, but what disturbed the country were the scenes of riot coming from this 'well off' estate. Again the key to understanding this lie is the role and profile of the university.





Students that are arrested and then not charged by the police are having a bit of fun, the kids of Blackbird Leys revelling around the town on a Saturday night are banged up for affray or ABH. The local paper is full of headlines like 'Estate Thugs Jailed' while on the next page you read 'Students Fined After Night of Violence'. Working people have lived with this glaring inequality of social control for hundreds of years.

Drugs are available all over the campuses of Oxford, but the police are powerless to enter these premises, so they raid Blackbird Leys instead. When the daughter of a prominent aristocrat was found over-dosed in her 'hall of residence' the police raided working class pubs and clubs all over the town.

When some Hoorays smashed up a restaurant in Woodstock some years ago, and badly beat up the manager, they got a fine and a telling off AT CROWN COURT. The same week some lads from Blackbird Leys and Barton were jailed for two years for having a punch up with some Chelsea fans where no-one else was injured and no damage to property or person was reported.

True to form the police have reacted to the joy riding only when the nation's eyes were on Oxford, no-one was hurt until the police stepped in. The police were complaining in the local nick about no overtime and under-staffing right up to explosion in the media then they got all the staff and overtime they wanted. To 'save'

Oxford from the joy riders they resorted to violence themselves, isn't the State wonderful, its only real sanction is its most potent - violence.

To understand the situation, firstly it's necessary to address the whole history of the working class in Oxford not just the bits we've seen in the Media. Situationism this isn't. This class war goes back centuries, why was it missed before?

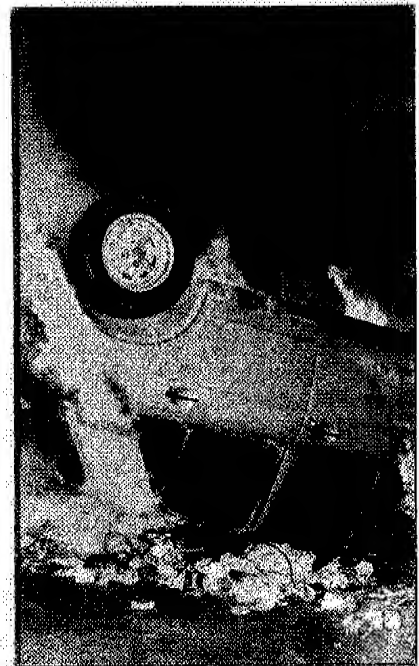
The university would hardly blame itself for the privations of the Council estates of Oxford. But ask yourself why the university, having moved the working class out of the city, are now doing up their old two up two down terraces and filling them with lecturers, dons and bursars. A clear case of booting the working class out and moving the yuppies in. As a result of this Oxford has no inner-city problem. All of the problem areas are on the periphery and don't qualify for special attention re: inner city grants and extra funding. There is a pervading myth of affluence around Oxford, don't believe centuries of university and hegemonic propaganda, question the past before you attempt to analyse the present.

The inequalities of social control that are operating in towns like Oxford, sanctioned by elitist bodies like the university, cause communities like Blackbird Leys to react. This kind of street violence is the symptom of earlier and deeper social conflict.

The social solidarity displayed by the people of the estates was fractured when the car factory stopped recruit-

ing and the joy riding began. Thus the community of Blackbird Leys split over the issue of joy riding. Joy riding gave the police and the bourgeoisie the opportunity they wanted to slag off the working class of Oxford.

Establishment versus Community, no matter how yobbish you view the joy riding in Blackbird Leys, you cannot deny the authorities have driven a wedge through the community. Those for joy riding and those against, those against the police and those who support their every action. Split the solidarity of the community and the police can then take sides, thereby justifying more intervention and police action on the estate.



We must start to identify and understand those continually emerging symbols that unite people against the State, and those that provoke the state to reveal its true intentions.

In Oxford it was the car. In Newcastle it was ram raiding (the car). With Cardiff it was an unpopular shop keeper (shoplifting and petty theft). To the New Age Travellers it was Stonehenge. In Tottenham and Brixton it was racist police (state) violence against the innocent individual that caused conflict. In Manchester it is drugs. And all around Britain it's Raves.

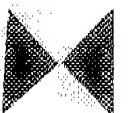
As a result of Tottenham, Toxteth, Mosside and Brixton, racism in the police and its institutions was identified. The result of which is that the whole credibility of the police has been shattered. The Guildford four and the Birmingham six have identified how racism plays its part in the judicial process. If you're Irish you're a bomber, if you're black you're a pimp/dealer/guilty and so on. Slowly but surely the state reveals its hand of symbols and is finally trumped but always too late in the game, the damage is done and the state and its agents bring into play the resources to cover its bloody tracks.

We need to identify these symbols earlier and wave them in the faces of the statists before they pick them out of our pockets and start belting us with them. We must begin to set the agenda for conflict, not stick to theirs. That's why Blackbird Leys got right up their nose, the community set the agenda.

Alternatives to accepted forms of social protest such as marches, community centres and local action groups are popping up all over the country and the symbols that these alternatives throw up are enormously important for us to understand how the state will react against people who organise themselves for themselves.

We should be identifying and supporting these symbols, not rubbishing them like the media and the left. The only question now is - on what symbol will the State's attention fall next?

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EAT THE GREENS

Saving the environment and the world seems to be a favourite pastime for middle class 'trendies' who appear to know best and think that the working class aren't bothered about green issues. Unless you've got the right environment friendly washing up liquid and are wearing a Green Party T-Shirt, you obviously don't care about the world - or do you?



Are green issues relevant to working class people in the first place?

Of course they are. On the face of it the things that get most publicity are often in far-off places and don't appear to affect working class people's daily lives; the hole in the ozone layer, endangered plants in foreign countries and tropical rain forest destruction.

Spokespeople for the green movement tend to be middle class types who assume they're only speaking to

The following article is based upon a discussion among members of Liverpool Class War

a middle class audience. Protecting the environment is made out to be about buying 'the right things'. It's cool to be a green consumer - there's even magazines telling us what to buy and how to be 'green' - whatever that means. This has produced companies like the Body Shop - with a squeaky clean, environmentally sound corporate image, and vast corporate profits as well.

So you are saying that 'green' issues aren't working class issues?

The state of our planet is important whether you live in an inner city tower block, a terraced street, or in the countryside. Crofters in Scotland get the worst acid rain and kids in the inner cities get lead poisoning from exhaust fumes.

So working class people shouldn't support green groups?

Despite appearances, groups like 'Friends of the Earth' do have working class people in them, but it's only the Jonathan Porritts of the green movement who get on TV and dictate what's important and what isn't. They have made sure that they control these groups and confine environmental concerns to working within the capitalist system to ensure that their own interests aren't threatened.

Many of them get a big fat wage packets from their groups so they've got to keep the whole green movement 'safe' and respectable. They sure don't want to have to raise the facts about the links between pollution and capitalism. After all, it's the ruling class and their business interests that cause pollution and environmental damage, not ordinary working class people.

These 'respectable' groups are much more interested in getting people to join them so they can be sent requests for another donation - as anyone who has been in Greenpeace will know!

What doesn't get reported or noticed is community struggle against pollution and damage.

So this affects the way people see Green issues?

Yes. As well as dominating the media and organisations, the middle class greens tend to focus on individual



changes to achieve a green lifestyle as the way forward, as if this kind of change can have any real impact on the environmental damage that capitalism does. Apart from this, is there much point in buying a costly planet friendly detergent like 'Green Clean' when the company that owns it will put the profits into developing other products that will kill just as many dolphins as you've just saved.

And don't forget that for many working class people it's a struggle just to buy a car let alone spend £400 on a catalytic converter. This focus on change is depressingly futile. It also tends to blame ordinary people for damaging the environment and leads people away from realising the true cause of environmental harm.

Poverty is a soul-destroying restriction they want to escape, not a way of life they've chosen because they think it's right-on. . . telling people they should 'live simply' is insufferably authoritarian.

Some greens say we have to give up all technology and go back to simple societies, surely this makes sense?

Some of the more radical greens do advocate rejecting the wasteful high consumption lifestyle and replacing it with a simpler way of life. They argue that the planet's resources can't indefinitely sustain the kind of life people in wealthy industrial countries are used to.

What they fail to see is that, when capitalism is destroyed, society will be very different. Most technology now is seen by working class people as an enemy, because it is usually connected with work or used negatively by

capitalists in search of big profits. Examples are production lines where workers have no control and can be made to work at a set speed, nuclear reactors which provide business with cheap fuel but are dangerous to workers and the surrounding population.

When technology is in the hands of the working class it can be used as a tool to vastly improve our lives. To make a lot of the work we do much easier, to advance useful science especially medicine, to make transport and communications more efficient - the positive possibilities for technology are endless.

Other greens say that we should stop buying new goods. It's one thing for a middle class person, who's had some wealth and the opportunities and freedom it gives, to decide they want to give it all up for something different. But try saying to the impoverished working class person that in the new green society they'll have to live at the same or a lower level than they do now. No prizes for guessing what response you'd get to that. Poverty is a soul-destroying restriction they want to escape, not a way of life they've chosen because they think it's right-on. Put this way, telling people they should 'live simply' is insufferably authoritarian.

Isn't that saying that anything we do as an individual is useless?

No, there's a difference between trying to make people feel guilty for 'living the wrong way' and accepting that we have a social responsibility for seeing how our actions affect the environment. Protecting the environment must include the ideal of mutual responsibility as opposed to the middle class/capitalist ideal of individual competition. We live in communities and must act in them as well.

Consumer capitalism is destroying the Earth and cannot meet human needs. The war against the planet is a class war, environmental destruction is linked to the exploitation of 'third world' resources and labour. The ecological crisis demands a revolutionary perspective. Without our anger and ideas, capitalism will leave the planet looking like burnt toast if profit demands say so. Either capitalism goes or we go!



So how can working class people live more 'greenly'?

Well ideally we are talking about rejecting capitalist values and replacing them with the traditional working class values of solidarity and resourcefulness. Capitalism is all about waste: getting more and more people to buy more and more goods that are designed to become obsolete. First there were vinyl records, then cassettes followed by 8-track cartridges, which have been replaced by CD's and now DAT and mini CD's. The catch is to create a market for each new format, each needing a new machine to play them on.

The technology exists to provide good quality, durable products in everything people need, but it's better for profits to make trash that becomes obsolete or falls apart. The green ideal is about avoiding waste, making good quality products and re-using or recycling everything possible and that's no more than common sense.

There have also been many (and will be many more) struggles against pollution and environmental damage by working class communities and we can all make our actions count. In 1989 a ship carrying toxic waste was touring the coast looking for somewhere to land. Dockers in Liverpool walked out and refused to unload it.

In East Howdon, on Tyneside, the community managed to step in and stop the building of a toxic waste incinerator in their midst. This campaign had local people involved, united together, hounding the local council to refuse planning permission, fly posting and picketing the site. In Renfrew, Scotland, local people also stopped a toxic waste incinerator from being built.

If we live in the countryside, footpaths are closed, and rivers being poisoned - and working class people are fighting these too. These are just a few examples, but whether its big, like stopping a motorway, or small, like the maintenance of nature reserves around Merseyside, working class people are fighting to save the planet.

Consumer capitalism is destroying the Earth and cannot meet human needs. The war against the planet is a class war, environmental destruction is linked to the exploitation of 'third world' resources and labour. The ecological crisis demands a revolutionary perspective. Without our anger and ideas, capitalism will leave the planet looking like burnt toast if profit demands say so. Either capitalism goes or we go!



CHARGE OF THE LEFT BRIGADE

The Left, Working Class Trade Unionism and the Experience of the Miners.

By DD, Doncaster Class War

The problem for the Left is their eternal dilemma; to make reality fit their preconceived theory of reality. So it is, that real situations in which ordinary people are involved become shoehorned into or abstracted out of 'the real situation' in order that the lefty theory might fit.

THE LEFT tends not to ask how ordinary folk see the struggle for themselves, what are their objectives, what are their inherited, adopted or developed means by which these objectives are pursued - in almost all cases such things are brushed aside, yes, by the Leninist left, but also by situationists and some anarchists. Brushed aside in order that 'the real lessons', 'the real goals' are followed. By and large, the Left appears not only with a different agenda, or certainly a larger agenda, than the one being debated by folk in struggle, but also comes amongst us 'as it were afire' with the prescriptions of how to achieve their agenda.

I remember quite vividly a scene at the Durham Miners Gala, as an elderly pitman listened patiently as a very young member of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) explained: 'Now here's why you lost the 1926 Strike... Of course the point of the lesson, like all the other lessons, is that they lost because the WRPer and his party wasn't around to tell the stupid miners where they were going wrong!



But the vanguards are selfless! Should the struggle break from the factory or pit, should it crash kicking and fighting into the street, they're straight there lad, flooding in with an armful of papers to explain to us, - us the people in struggle, whose struggle it is in the first place, **JUST WHERE WE'RE GOING WRONG!** Now frequently not only are our methods wrong, doomed, reformist, or else ultra-leftist, economist, or adventurous, individual terrorist even, we also take part in the **WRONG** struggle anyway, we shouldn't be doing what we're doing, we've got it all wrong and we should be doing something entirely different. There is never any significance to the struggles of the workers themselves, until the Leninist/Situationist/Trotskyist Moses comes along and tells us what it is. It's like Billy Connolly's sarcastic vision of the primitive jungle tribe standing around saying,

'I wish an explorer would come and tell us where we are.'

So the workers generally bumble through history saying,

'I wish the revolutionary leadership would turn up and tell us what we're doing!'

And yet such theories of organisation and practice are generally cobbled together in somebody's backyard and then wheeled onto the street and sold to the working class as 'their organisation', despite the fact that the working class has not previously seen it and certainly played no part in its construction.

Can you wonder that industrial and unionised workers identify more with their Trade Union branch, lodge, shop stewards committee or whatever, than they do with the

revolutionary donkey constructed out of somebody's Book of Revolutionary Organisation. This is not so much 'blind faith in reformist organisation'. It is identification with organisations that have been built by the workers themselves, and although deformed to a greater or lesser extent by bureaucracy and treachery, are still the front line defence for workers. Workers will use them and test them to breaking point, far more efficiently than the home grown do-it-yourself variety constructed by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) or the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP).

To contrast, for example, the National Union of Mineworkers, or its forebears, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain & Ireland and the Miners Union, have the best part of 180 years unbroken class struggle trade unionism. The will-o-the-wisp nature of most left groups seems an uneven contest. Which has greater utility to the class, which has more loyalty FROM the class?

One could go further and point to specific areas of the miners unions' history where it has been a class leader and a catalyst in revolutionary upsurges. The 1830s, through to the 1860s as part of the Swing revolts, as cornerstones of the Chartist Movement, 1912 and the industrial General Strike wave, 1926, 1972 and of course the Strike of 1984/5.

Despite this when we launched our defensive assault against the full weight of the State, as a community and an industrial union, the left came, not to fall in behind, nor yet to assist when we needed them - they came to lead us and tell us what to do. What were their credentials for telling us what to do? Despite the bureaucracy (albeit a left one) and despite certain privileged sections of the union structure, what made their so-called revolutionary organisations more revolutionary than our Trade Union in practice? We are still waiting to be convinced.

... 'Keep Picket Targets Secret! The Walls Have Ears!' ... These targets drove the SWP to distraction, because they didn't know where the action was until after we'd been and gone and done it. This is very troubling if you're a vanguard!

The SWP, despite a venomously anti-union verbiage, strangely shares the same bureaucratic lack of vision and faith in the workers as do the NUM bureaucrats. To this day they don't really understand the tactics employed in the '84/85 strike and never really grasped the pickets' perspective of the struggle. Instead they basked in the reflected glow of Arthur Scargill's General Custer impersonation - Never Mind the Tactics, Charge! Whilst they were determined to fight to the last drop of our blood, we wished to shed that blood less freely, more wisely, not less revolutionary, certainly no less violently if it meant retaliating against the police - or retaliating first!



police station at Grimethorpe being inspected by officers after a raid by local residents

If the different perspectives can be summed up in military terms, Arthur and the SWP saw themselves as the vanguard of the class army lined up against the ruling class enemy in a do-or-die battle at Orgreave - we saw ourselves as a guerrilla force of rarely more than 20,000 pickets nationally, fighting a massive deployment of police with the full range of computer and surveillance equipment. Standing toe to toe we would always be battered, so we used guerrilla tactics; blocking the M1, hit squad raids on scab pits or police bases, blocking the Humber Bridge, ruse tactics to draw the mass of police off somewhere else while our main force deployed to some least-expected power station, wharf or scab pit. Because of the absolute need for secrecy only the elected picket co-ordinators knew the plan, village pubs had posters on the walls: 'Keep Picket Targets Secret! The Walls Have Ears!'

These targets drove the SWP to distraction, because they didn't know where the action was until after we'd been and gone and done it. This is very troubling if you're a vanguard! Arthur was similarly distressed but he also had no control or say over the direction of our targets or the manner in which we conducted these attacks. We also differed on perceptions of the struggle. Arthur saw Orgreave as a Saltley Gate, a rally point for the whole Trade Union movement and the left; mass enough of our class together and we could swamp them. This strategy was fatally flawed, not least because we'd tried it at Grunwick and despite far more support than the miners got, had still lost it, we'd tried it at Warrington and got battered to Hell. For things had changed since Saltley, not simply the responses or lack of them from the Union bureaucracies and often from union members, but also the degree to which the police had been given their head and told not to back off.

Even had we been prepared to bleed long enough we would always ultimately lose that kind of head to head battle, at least so long as we remained unarmed, and even



then I wouldn't imagine us marching with flags flying and bayonets fixed to a field of battle which had been previously marked out and set up by an even more substantially armed police force. It shouldn't need arguing that our tactics were wiser, more radical, and more daring - they were also more FUN.

'Everyone to Orgreave' was not a tactic, it was an act of faith or at best a case of misjudgement. What it also was, was the restoration of a tactic in which the self-designated leaders could start playing vanguard again.

Of course once Arthur had 'had the vision', and the Great Plan formed in his head, he announced off his own bat on every TV channel in the land that everyone worth their salt should go to Orgreave.

We went. Why?

I remember one Mayday in Glasgow debating with fellow republicans how best to take the cause of Ireland onto the Mayday march and onto those streets of mixed traditions. We agreed that by confining the question to Troops Out and Self Determination for the Irish People, we would outflank the Trades Council bureaucracy and the heavy Stickie presence. But one of our number, despite our logic, our tactics or our majority, said he would raise the Irish Tricolour, emblazoned with the Phoenix of the Provisional IRA. Of course we knew once we did that he would be attacked by the Orangies, the Stalinists, the Trades Council bureaucrats and we would have no choice but to defend him and the flag against them.

The same principled obligation was placed on us by Arthur's 'Horatio on the Bridge' stance. Ditch warfare, the replay of World War 1, had started at Orgreave, the fight was happening and we had no choice but to join it. Fierce we were and unrestrained, publicly uncritical, but we knew it to be foolish in the extreme. The left viewed it like the Charge of the Light Brigade - bloody but magnificent.

Not that, once they got there, they actually DID anything. Did this revolutionary left that had shouted 'Orgreave!' on our marches have a plan once we got there? Oh no, off you chaps go and do the fighting as best you can and we'll sell papers telling you how well or how bad

you've done.

To my dying day I'll never forget the scene, as Hatfield and Armthorpe miners, the then storm troops of the pickets, launched a fearful physical assault, semi-naked and unarmed, against the massed ranks of riot shields.

'Workers Power!' he cried, as we ran past, bleeding, sweating and laughing. Then the cavalry rode past him, to the left and right as bombards of bricks hit them from all sides. We retreated into the trees and waited till they rode back, bloody and hot. Then we crept out to dare again and found the man still unmoved in his central position. 'Workers Power!' he cried.

Despite the police armoury, the sheer weight, determination and boisterousness of the pickets knocked line upon line of police shields over, then the whistle blew, the shields stood to the side and a mounted cavalry of nightstick wielding armoured thugs rode forth, we retreated up the road and as we did so we passed a lone man trying to sell us Workers Power. 'Workers Power!' he cried, as we ran past, bleeding, sweating and laughing. Then the cavalry rode past him, to the left and right as bombards of bricks hit them from all sides. We retreated into the trees and waited till they rode back, bloody and hot. Then we crept out to dare again and found the man still unmoved in his central position. 'Workers Power!' he cried.

The class war literally took place around him; he was like a program seller at a concert, not part of the band, nor yet part of the audience, he was estranged from both; just a seller of a version of events of which he was not part. Fine. I was a 60's product, if that's your thing, man; but does he really think either we, or the cops for that matter, needed to read the paper? Though I'm not sure if he did try to sell the cavalry a copy. Maybe for a front page photo of the charge, I mean the cops probably thought they looked magnificent. They certainly thought Workers Power were insignificant. So did we.

The WRP operated in the revolutionary Hall of Mirrors which decrees that all workers struggles are doomed without them being led by the REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, namely themselves. So it then follows that anything the working class do is doomed, a blind alley, because it hasn't been led by them. For people like myself, field officers of the struggle, it was automatic that we would BETRAY the struggle, because we weren't part of the revolutionary party. Mass picketing, hit squads, anti-scab, anti-police assaults were ALL a dead end, they said. Instead they offered us a real solution: **THE MINERS SHOULD CALL ON THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL TO LEAD A GENERAL STRIKE!**



We replied...woah, woah, we're the MINERS. Don't you know ANYTHING AT ALL about our history? The TUC? A General Strike? Are they stupid? No, stupidity is their public face. In private they'll tell you they KNOW the TUC will never organise a general strike and if they did they'd only betray it as they did in 1926 - so why call for it.

Because us dumbchucks, the rank and file pitmen and our families and the workers at large need to be shown that the existing Trade Union structure is no good for this sort of battle and it should be left to the REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Get it? Urge us into a defeat, we get smashed, then pick up the pieces to build your own outfit by blaming it on the old outfit...nice. Trouble with this theory is, we'd already been there in 1926. Miners children are WEANED on the story of that betrayal of the miners by the TUC. We GREW UP knowing the limitations of the TUC General Council and that's why we would never accept that stupid slogan of the WRP. If this was a sample of their organisational worth over the NUM, is it any wonder the NUM continued the struggle with fire and pride whilst the WRP stood under umbrellas for fear of the rain and tried pathetically to sell papers so wet you couldn't light a fire with them.

So what is the point or relevance of all this?

Simply that the NUM, as a tried and tested organ of the miners for generations, despite its designation as a TRADE UNION, is not simply a trade union and need not remain so if the members of that organisation wish to extend it to wider and more political fields. This can

be done formally through the changing of rules and organs, more usually it is done by building (constitutionally) unofficial committees, councils, joint branch panels, assemblies and the like. This is not done in opposition to the NUM, which we hold as our organisation but in extension to it. It is because the trade union form has limitations, not least from dire anti-union laws, that we recognise in many cases what functions are best served through other forms, which although not part of the structure of the NUM, overlap or criss-cross it.

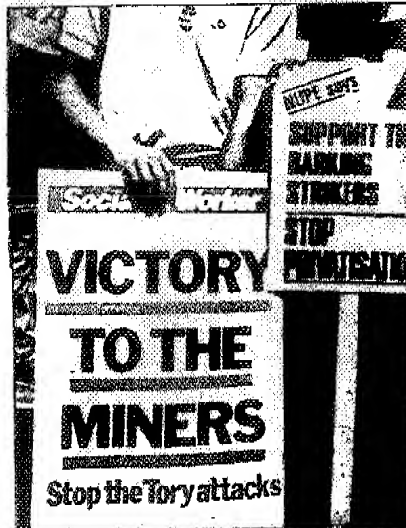
Thus, despite the existence of formal union committees, nearly every pit had a Strike Committee, formed of strike activists; often these included representatives of the women's support groups, sections of the unemployed and so on. It is these who plan the implementation of picket tactics and the 'extra-curricular' activity which nobody claims yet is still organised in and around the committees and the union. Unofficial gatherings of local branches or panels elect strike co-ordinators who will, quite outside the formal union structure draw up targets and plans of attack and initiatives. And yet at the same time this is a strike of the NUM and every man and woman proudly proclaims their loyalty to its form. Their direct organisation, their fuller participation, their community bases, activist oriented extensions of the formal union were not and are not contradictory. At least we understand them. The Leninist with his/her vision of the trade union as an obstacle to the struggle cannot be that flexible.



Take for example a recent struggle at the Frickley Colliery in Yorkshire where miners were on strike over a dismissed comrade. The strike must spread, but anti-union laws hamstringing the formal union apparatus. How does the rank and file member of the union view the situation? He is both loyal to the NUM and yet because of the restrictions placed upon its formal structures by the law, is inhibited from its use. He declares, send unofficial pickets, and we will not pass them. The branch cannot formally sanction this legally, but branch officials declare union policy of not crossing picket lines.

The branch officials say, 'it's my formal duty to tell you that such action is secondary picketing and unlawful'. The men say, OK, then go home - and the branch officials go with them.

The SWP on the other hand demand, **MAKE THE LEADERS ACT**, they call for us to send formal resolutions to the official NUM Council Meeting, knowing full well the Area Officials will rule them Out of Order, for if they didn't the whole organisation would be smashed in the courts.



Both we and the Area officials, on a nod and wink, say get on with the strike by other means and ignore the formal structure. All of us involved understand that this is a pantomime intended to let us do what we want to do anyway, the SWP sees it as some serious Shakespearean drama and assumes the idea is to confront the union apparatus. It isn't, it's to confront British Coal's apparatus, stick two fingers up at the law and fight for the reinstatement of the sacked Frickley comrade.

We have need for the formal structure of the NUM for welfare benefits, for countless legal injury and death cases. So we maintain it, at the same time going around it, over it or underneath it to do what we want to. We see this as no contradiction. The SWP thinks we have it wrong, because frankly they don't understand our relationship with official and unofficial aspects of our organisations. But as a matter of fact, why should they.

As things turned out, the Frickley strike was derailed, largely because the unofficial flying pickets weren't deployed and a different device, aimed at using the law while breaking it, failed. In all, we the members, kept the official union out of it because

they couldn't assist us. The SWP blamed the collapse of the strike on the **FAILURE OF THE LEADERS TO ACT...**

We pass each other like ships in the night.

Not that such blinkered vision is confined to Leninists. Cajo Brendel, in 'Autonomous Class Struggle in Britain 1945-77', what I suppose is Situationist work (in fact Cajo Brendel is not a Situationist, but a veteran Dutch council communist - editor's note), misses the relationship of the worker to the trade union, in a period of mass Trade Union upsurge, sees all struggle as anti-union and non-struggle as trade unionism. He repeats the dogma that unions can only **RESTRICT** the struggle of the class and **NEVER**, not **EVER**, have been used by the class as a combative force, despite bureaucratic restrictions and outright betrayals. He is confident enough to write an extensive thesis without **ONCE** referring to any of the workers involved in the struggles he cites. The struggle is an abstract, it doesn't involve real people with their own views on things and their own ways of changing things.

And herein lies the rub.

Organisations are composed of individuals. These individuals are involved in **ACTUAL CLASS WAR**, not for some theoretical reason, or some moral reason, but in order to meet the needs of **SOCIAL SURVIVAL** and in order to resist the exploitation placed on them by capitalist society. These people, acting as a class have built self defence organisations, trade unions for example.

Over the years, and in some cases from the very start, these organisations have become bureaucratic, conservative and obstructive. This has not stopped workers using them, **MAKING** them fight and literally picking them up kicking and screaming and forcing them to act. Often they have built unofficial sections, semi-official sections, sometimes they work within the organisation, sometimes they use the organisation as a jumping-off board for activities far beyond the normal perception of what a trade union does. Dropping concrete on blackleg buses for example, or burning them, launching petrol bomb attacks on police stations in 1984. Or derailing the Flying Scots-





man in 1962, although THAT was after a formal resolution to that effect was accepted by the Chopwell Lodge!

Workers will make these organisations do what they wish, or fight to make them do what they wish. They will drive the Trade Union bus in whatever direction they want to go, no matter what it says on the front. And while it wasn't constructed for, say, charging police roadblocks, from time to time it is the nearest thing to hand and will do until something stronger comes along. This bus may not take us as far as we want to go, but in many cases we can take it as far as it will go, at which point we'll adapt it or change it for something else.

PEOPLE make history, PEOPLE make the means of class war and are far more versatile and inspirational than the Leninist or Situationist who sees all forms carved in tablets of stone, unchanging, fixed, regardless of circumstances. This determination would well please a Jehovah's Witness. We say, the future is unwritten, this is true, but the means by which we write it, draw it, shape it, or spell it will be determined as we go. Also if the future is unwritten, the means we write it with, is also not pre-determined.

For us as revolutionaries, we should intervene in the struggles the workers

themselves are engaged in, we should assist them in the way THEY wish to be assisted. We should put our determination, skill, constructive and destructive abilities at their disposal, and ask, 'how can we assist you'. 'How are we better placed to do some of the things you want doing but can't do yourselves?'

We must fundamentally recognise that the working class was engaged in struggle before any of us organisationally or individually came along. They are engaged in a struggle NOW, with us or without us, THEY ARE NOT WAITING FOR US. If we wish to assist the struggle we should join it. We should fight where they are fighting, if necessary in the unions they are fighting in, or the tenants' committee they are fighting in, or the anti-pollution campaign they are fighting in, or the anti-motorway group they are fighting in.

We will be of relevance so long as we intervene, without pre-conditions, without delusions of vanguardism, into actual struggles of the working class, not standing outside the class mocking the crude attempts at combat organisations the workers have built, but alongside them, as part of them.

In the words of the 'Internationale':

*'No saviours from on high deliver...
The chains OUR OWN
right hands shall sever.'*

Glossary of Terms

General Custer led his couple of hundred cavalry into a battle against thousands of Sioux Indians. The cavalry, being massively outnumbered were massacred.

'Horatio on the bridge' refers to Admiral Nelson's determination to win battles, no matter what the cost to his troops.

Saltley Gate was a solidarity action from other workers. This, together with secondary picketing by miners, succeeded in shutting down this major coke depot. It was the turning point in the 1972 strike leading to the miners victory.

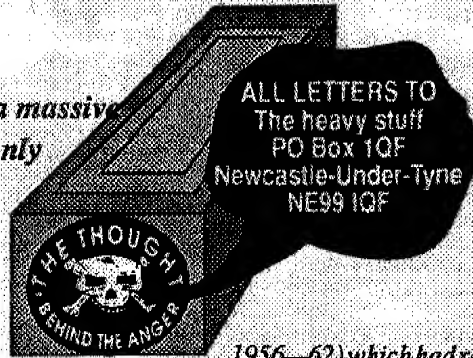
Situationism, in the context of this article refers to a belief in the spontaneity of the working class, rather than action being instigated by any established organisation.

Stickles, Nickname of the 'old IRA', as opposed to the provisional IRA - see letters in this issue.



LETTERS

An article on Ireland in Heavy Stuff 4 led to a massive response. Due to limitations of space we can only print two of the replies to the feature on the Six Counties.



Alternative Ulster

Dear 'Heavy Stuff'

Thanks for sending me issue 4. It's nice to read a political magazine that's more interested in raising questions and stimulating debate than in laying down the law on this, that and the other and massaging the egos of its writers.

I have a lot I'd like to say about most of it but to keep it short I'll concentrate on one thing - the article on Ireland and the IRA. I'm glad you're opening a debate on this subject as it's usually ignored, side-stepped or just buried under a lot of

lefty jargon or clichés. I'd like to take Micky up on a few things which I felt were misleading or contradictory.

1. He says that the IRA was 'away reading books in the South' when the Loyalists attacked in 1969. This has a grain of truth but is unfair. The majority of Northern IRA members were living in the ghettos of Belfast and Derry when the fighting started and responded as well as they could. The fact that the pathetic Dublin leadership, which had turned into little more than a Marxist debating club, had deliberately wound down the IRA's fighting ability in the North ('to avoid sectarian strife') was little to do with the remaining Northern members. They had suffered terrible disillusionment during the IRA's previous campaign (the farcical 'border' campaign

1956-62) which had resulted in little more than a few customs huts wrecked and several hundred republicans dumped in jail.

On the night of the 14th August 1969 when things began to get really serious in Belfast, the IRA gathered their pathetically small arsenal of weapons and were active in various parts of West Belfast, sometimes without guns.

They did their best given the crap circumstances they'd been dumped in by their leaders. An example is that the Ardoyne IRA were issued with weapons by the Belfast leaders (who took orders from Dublin) some time before the riots and then had them taken away again, so were unable to take effective action.

To say the IRA were 'away reading books' and 'nowhere to be seen' is wrong and unfair. This is to confuse the average working class IRA member with the leadership of the time. (The Provos split away under stimulus from northern groups who were pissed off to say the least with the official leadership attitude). It also seems to say that the IRA is separate from the communities. This is not true. They are overwhelmingly working class and do have broad support in the communities (of which they are a part not an outside influence).

2. The article says 'in the beginning the IRA recruited large numbers of working class youths who had fought in defence of their communities' then 'it's time the myth of the Provos being a peoples army...was knocked on the head'.

There seems to be a contradiction here. Was it the case that the Provos were just using youths who joined in



weapons (soon in very large amounts). The relationship was a two way thing.

Although the IRA is far from being a democratic organisation, this large intake of Northern youths has eventually led to a dramatic change in the Provos. They are now Northern-centred (the old Southern leadership losing credibility as the 70s went on) and have become political (the original Provos were 'pure' nationalists, quite right wing and catholic in many ways). I think it's important to realise that though the IRA may not have begun '69-70 as a people's army, they quickly became something close to it. This is an uncomfortable fact for me because I hate their politics, but it has to be accepted.

3. The impression that all lefties give uncritical support to the IRA is wrong. I last heard the SWP had a policy of 'critical support'. If we want to win over people from leftist groups it's best not to make wrong generalisations about them - don't write them off, there are some good folk involved.

I'd better wind up now as this letters getting too long. I'll just finish by saying apart from the points I've made I agreed with the article - we have a right to pass judgement on the IRA and not to support them blindly because of their crappy authoritarian politics and because of their often careless and sloppy military activities which leave innocent people dead. This issue, I was disappointed to see, was as usual, avoided.

We can support the idea of an armed defence force without having to support what exists now. I also agree that the British have to leave Ireland for any progress to be made, but obviously it will be the beginning of the next stage of the class struggle and not an end in itself.

Yours, Bob Stirling

A progressive and just cause

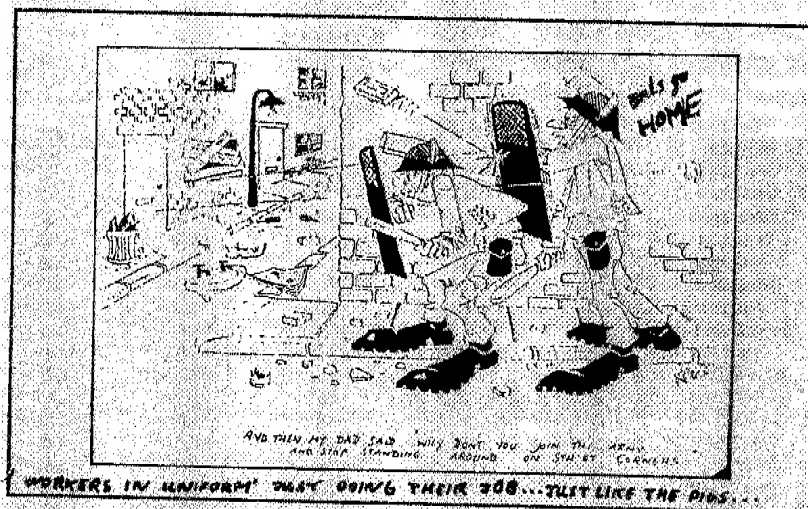
Dear Heavy Stuff

One of the biggest parts of the 'tragedy of Ireland' is the ignorance of the English, not least those on the so called left. If any proof was needed of this, one need look no further than the last edition of Heavy Stuff and the article on Ireland. That such ignorance of the basic issues involved and historical facts behind the current situation are widespread among the working class is a problem in itself; to see them so blatantly put forward as 'analysis' in what should be the most informed journal of the left is nothing short of mind numbing.

Let's be quite clear on one thing, Micky's version of the events are not some 'new' or 'clear' perspective on the issue, in fact the members of Militant, the Irish Communist Organisation, or the even more loony Spartacists League, would all agree with the tale the way Mick tells it. As to answering the questions 'the lefties' are afraid to ask, I'm afraid the truth is, both they and Mick fell for the same propaganda distortion. FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME LET US PAINFULLY TRY AND EXPLAIN:-

THE WAR IN IRELAND IS A WAR BETWEEN IRISH NATIONALISTS AND THE BRITISH STATE, IT IS A WAR MADE MORE DIFFICULT BECAUSE SOME OF THE IRISH WORKING CLASS SUPPORT THE BRITISH STATE AGAINST THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE. BY AND LARGE IT IS A WAR BETWEEN THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE IRISH PEOPLE FOR CONTROL OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY AND THOSE WHO SEEK TO PRESERVE THE DOMINATION OF THAT COUNTRY BY THE BRITISH STATE.

The war IS NOT ABOUT Catholics and Protestants, it is not about a catholic working class and a Protestant working class. There is only one working class in all Ireland, the Irish working class, but this class is divided along POLITICAL lines, i.e. Loyalism and Republicanism.



The struggle between those forces is not 'the same'. The struggle to oust British Imperialism from Ireland IS A PROGRESSIVE AND JUST CAUSE. The struggle to maintain the domination of Ireland by the British State is a backward and reactionary cause. The real question you must ask, to be taken seriously on Ireland is, WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THESE ISSUES?

Try and be liberal, step out of the war or side-step the question all you want, all this establishes is that you are outside the struggle being waged and you have side-stepped the most pressing question for the workers living under the British state, particularly those living in England.

Until the English working class break their 'common cause' with the British state's war against Ireland, they themselves will always identify with its existence. The fancy leg work performed by the so called British left, including Micky, to dodge the question of Ireland, would make Michael Jackson jealous.

Militant and others bemoan the fact that the struggle in Ireland is 'different' than here, there is nothing they can tape worm into. For this reason they, and the Labour establishment hit on a good idea 'let's build an Irish Labour party, like the one here, to be part of one great big working class British Labour party'. The hope was that both 'Catholics and Protestants' could join it, and that would be the nasty question disposed of.

Sadly, life is not like that, for the first question asked of such a party in Ireland would be WHERE DOES THE NORTHERN IRISH SECTION



IRA'). Under the direction of the new EUROROAD of the Irish Communist Party, all was made liberal sweetness and reformist light. Their 'Better Life For All Campaign' aimed at uniting 'Catholic and Protestant', side-stepped the question of Irish independence and the end of British Imperialism, it was only weeks before the campaign was dubbed 'The British Life For All Campaign'.

stayed under the hood of the Ku Klux Klan. To shout in abstract 'unite the black and white sections of the working class', is irrelevant, unless the poor whites abandon the Klan and support the oppressed blacks.

'Uniting' warring factions of the working class sounds nice, actually it's less than liberal in the context of the struggle for basic civil, say human rights for black people. Yes, unite the struggles of the poor whites, with the more greatly oppressed blacks, but that means the whites must stop identifying with the oppressors of the blacks.

The same is true of Ireland. The Protestant worker has been duped into supporting his oppressor because his oppressor gives him more than the Catholic worker. Loyalism has meant you support British State domination. You have a house (a slum), the Catholic finds it much harder to get any house. You have a job (the lowest paid in Europe), the Catholic doesn't work. You have the vote, the Catholics didn't get it on the same basis until 1969.

By 1969 the struggle was beyond parliamentary reform even in their community, and the Loyalists had again used extra parliamentary methods, i.e. terrorism.

The struggle to maintain the domination of Ireland by the British State is a backward and reactionary cause. The real question you must ask, to be taken seriously on Ireland is, WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THESE ISSUES?

OF THE LABOUR PARTY STAND ON THE QUESTION OF IRISH INDEPENDENCE? Would the answer make the party A LOYALIST LABOUR PARTY OR A REPUBLICAN LABOUR PARTY?

If it became one or the other it would exclude not Catholics or Protestants but Republicans or Loyalists according to its policy. If it didn't answer at all, it would be irrelevant and nobody but the Militants would join it because it doesn't address the issue. The same is true of the Old Rusty Guns (the once called 'Official

Take Micky's version of anarchist politics into Belfast or Derry - you know what they would ask? 'Is this Republican Anarchism or Loyalist Anarchism'? Get out of it and say 'it's neither', they'll say 'WHAT BLOODY USE ARE YOU THEN? YOU HAVE NO POSITION ON THE WAR WE ARE ENGAGED IN, PISS OFF BACK TO ENGLAND TO YOUR LIBERAL FRIENDS'.

It would have been nice if the poor Southern whites in America, during the struggle for black civil rights had joined that cause. Instead a great many

In all of this, it wasn't religions that were at odds. Protestants founded Irish Republicanism, their names and portraits are large on the walls of 'Catholic', i.e. Republican areas. Protestants to this day who oppose Loyalism often oppose British occupation, some are currently members of the IRA and a number are prominent members of Sinn Fein, and even more numerous those ad hoc groups around 'Troops Out'.

The struggle in the deep south of North America was not black versus white, it was civil/human rights versus apartheid and fascism. That most of the people involved in the civil rights movement were black is so bloody obvious it shouldn't need saying. That those who opposed were white is, tragically, the cause of the movement in the first place. We are predominantly white in this movement, but we would support that struggle now, in theory as some of us did in practice in that time.

The problem it seems for English 'liberals' is that the Irish working class is the same colour across the divide. If the Catholics were black and the Loyalists white, Micky and his mates would have no problem recognising 'white' supporters of the struggle for Irish freedom and would probably count himself as one of them.

'Uniting' people would not then be about 'Catholics' dropping their anti-imperialism in order to 'unite' with 'Protestants', but would be what it is just now - willing the Irish working class to oust British Imperialism,

Loyalism and Capitalism, and impose its own 'Irish Ireland' - a Working Class Rule over the whole thirty two counties.

One quite deliberate distortion which Micky makes is to associate the Provisional IRA with its predecessor, the so called 'old IRA' or Official IRA as it was subsequently called. This was quite dishonest.

The 'old IRA' was nicknamed Rusty Guns, I Ran Away and the like, because under the influence of the Irish Communist Party, and their version of the BRITISH ROAD TO SOCIALISM, they long ago abandoned armed struggle and thought reform of the British State and Eire was the way forward for the Irish working class.

The B Specials and the Loyalist murder gangs were allowed to run amok through the republican (largely Catholic) ghettos. For this reason, and to re-establish armed struggle in the cause of Irish Freedom, the Provisional IRA was formed. A brief military war ensued between the old IRA and the Provos until the latter drove the former out. Micky, in finding a stick to hit the Provos with, uses the crimes of the old IRA, who the Provos were set up in direct opposition to.

The IRA were not in the South reading books, the IRA were composed of young Irish working class lads and lasses, poorly armed, who went onto the streets, guns in hand, to confront the RUC, the Orange Fas-

cists and subsequently the British Army. Tell any of the republican communities, that the IRA (and that means the Provos) were reading books and not fighting. Tell that to the hundreds of families who've lost youngsters who died as volunteers fighting Britain's forces, or to the thousands of families with men and women banged up in jails all over Britain for fighting imperialism. If they don't give you a fat lip, it'll be because they think you're insane. If Micky thinks it's a myth that the Provos are an army recruited from the very cream of Ulster's working class youth, where the hell does he suggest the volunteers come from - Trinity College?

One might even have thought that Micky, in true liberal tradition, would condemn the British imperialist army and its Orange murder squads, as much as he condemned the IRA, but he didn't.

One thing further, 'The Spirit of Freedom' is an excellent pamphlet, it has nothing whatever to do with the line put forward in Micky's article. We recommend you read it and see if you can find anything at all in common with Micky's contribution.

Yours

Doncaster Class War.



Pissing in the wind?: Orange bandsman prepare to celebrate the anniversary.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

some thoughts on the role of the Class War Federation

By Bristol Class War

Why does Class War exist? A stupid question you might say, but one that we must be very aware of if we are to succeed in our aims and not seem like a collection of confused and contradictory people.

Firstly, why a federation with membership and a constitution? Why not just have an informal collective who produce Class War propaganda?



The short answer is that if people are to achieve any objective that involves a number of other people then some sort of organisation is necessary. Whether that objective is growing corn, building a house or destroying the State and capitalism. For any of these things to be done the people involved must know what they want

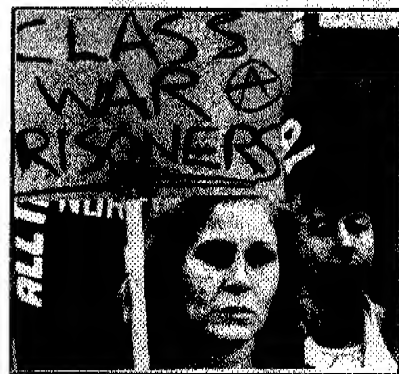
to achieve and how they are going to do it. Just wishing it to be will not do anything.

The other reason is strength; one match stick on its own will snap between your fingers, so will two but it will be a bit harder. But try snapping thirty, forty or a hundred match sticks all together. You can't, and neither can the State.

Why Class War? As the Federation stands at the moment we've been mainly a propaganda organisation, producing and distributing Britain's "Most Unruly Tabloid". We can safely say that this has been a runaway success (though there is always room for improvement!); and although the Federation does actively engage in day-to-day struggles, we do not claim to be the be-all and end-all of revolutionary activity, unlike some left-wing groups we could mention.

So what are we all about? Well, we wish to promote and develop the existing class struggle that goes on in our society, so that it can achieve its full revolutionary potential. We call this building a culture of resistance. Our politics are about promoting this; our aim is to champion a revolutionary class consciousness. The most important parts of this class consciousness would be:-

1 The rise of libertarian, leaderless and democratic self-organisation within our class struggle. Whether this be in campaigns we are fighting, for example, the anti-poll tax campaign, or the organisations we need to fight



our struggles, like rank-and-file groups, community groups, for example, radical tenants associations, and special interest groups, those fighting facism, for example.

What we want to stress within groups like these is the ability to have an EFFICIENT and DEMOCRATIC structure. It's no good having one without the other; organisations that do not have either of these important goals will either be authoritarian or irrelevant. This is not an easy task, it can be painstakingly laborious, but it



is ESSENTIAL if our struggle is to go ever forward. We don't have magic formulas, these come out of experience, and hopefully we all learn from them.

2 Promoting and building up the confidence in our class, so that people can think for themselves. This means having an autonomous class view or perspective on the way our society is, the way our struggle should be carried on, and the way we want society to change. Working class people are not thick, we have a lot of suss and first-hand experience of class struggle, more so than most intellectuals.

But the world is complicated and confusing at times. We have to stand back and look at the world and develop our own independent view, for ourselves. If we do not we will be open to all sorts of shite ideas (however radical and pro-working class they may seem) by the various brands of intellectuals.

What we are talking about is a radical self-education of our class. Our knowledge won't come from universities, but from within our struggle. We need to develop the ability of the



majority to become grassroots intellectuals (of some kind) as well as activists fighting the class war. The only way we can get rid of intellectual leadership is by making it obsolete and irrelevant. We all have a lot to learn!

3 The ability and the political will to overcome the divisions which run through our class - sexism, racism, anti-gay and the dog-eat-dog syndrome which exist at the moment. We know the root of these divisions come from the ruling elite's promotion of these ideas. But the fact is, if we can't overcome

these barriers and divisions, then we've got no chance of taking on the state and the bosses.

These false divisions come from capitalism, it's known as divide-and-rule and it's the oldest trick in the book. They are a vital part of the whole power structure. They can't be destroyed within capitalism. We will only begin to overcome these divisions through working to overthrowing capitalism.

The only way we see of doing this is by class struggle. That is not to say the struggle against these things are secondary to the class struggle, but that class struggle politics should address and make central the struggle to overcome these barriers between us all.

This is not a case of 'wait till the revolution' to overcome sexism, racism and so on, but by making class struggle relevant to these oppressed groups in the here and now.

Our movement and politics must be able to accommodate radical self-determination from these social groups. Because we want working class self-determination to achieve a genuine revolution, we should make room for people to organise autono-

mously so that they can achieve a genuine liberation from their oppression. This is not to say that separatism is riddled with all kinds of contradictions, but it is important to promote an alternative (which have been developing in recent years) to the negative aspects of separatism.

4 Promoting and building up a sense of an international class consciousness. No easy task given the wide and varied cultures throughout the globe. Plus the different economic experience of those we could call the international working class; i.e. the

experience of someone on the dole in Britain would be radically different from a peasant from Bolivia!

What we need is an internationalist and Third World perspective to our politics and eventually our class consciousness. This form of class consciousness would have to tackle local and national chauvinism (which, for example, divides Northerners from Southerners in Britain) and internationally divides people from other countries into foreigners to be despised and ridiculed. This is very important for obvious reasons, because the class revolution must be a global revolution, otherwise it will fail if it is just in one country.

Developing an international class consciousness will mean the death of racist, nationalist and even regionalist sentiments that hold our class back. Because our (global) class has different experiences under capitalism it will want and demand different things. But we are all united in our powerlessness and willingness to change our world. We must promote the idea in people's minds to have solidarity with people in struggle throughout the world after all, **THEIR STRUGGLE IS ULTIMATELY OUR STRUGGLE.**

WHAT SHOULD REVOLUTIONARIES DO?

We've talked about what are the important elements of a revolutionary working class consciousness, but what role do revolutionaries like ourselves have in promoting libertarian class struggle politics?

Well, starting with the basics, our first role is **POLITICISING** of people. This is not to say that our class is not political. Our class, by its very existence has got to struggle all the time.



Whether this be in the workplace against the bosses and sell-out union leadership, or in our communities struggling against police harassment and criminalisation.

But our class has a healthy distrust of politics. This is positive, up to a point, as it has people seeing through the sham of parliamentary and other such oppressive politics. Where it is negative is in the fact that rejection of the formal politics of the State, also means rejection of our own radical class politics. A case of throwing out the baby with the bath water.

This is sometimes overcome in times of crisis. By necessity people become political because their backs are up against the wall. What our politics should be encouraging is more acts which are essential to class politics, such as cop-bashing, not paying your taxes, squatting, and flying pickets, and point out that these can be politically subversive and a permanent part of our fight back.

Like parliamentary politics, socialist politics have become formalised and distanced from the working class. Which is quite ironic as socialism is meant to bring about the self liberation of the working class. Left-wing parties have professionalised socialism in order to lead the working class. Their leadership is both undesirable and unworkable - because it is so out of touch. Libertarian revolutionaries

need to put first the promotion of a grass roots socialism with libertarian and democratic practices.

PUTTING ACROSS REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS and making them popular is another essential element of our work. The State and the media (and other agents of ruling class power) are constantly promoting ideas that are vital to their rule. They would like us to say yes to their power. This does happen but it is flawed by people's experience, such as almost everyone realises we are not living in Major's classless society.

The ruling class concentrates on those ideas that cause disunity within our class, like 'immigrants are taking your jobs', or 'unemployed people are scroungers' and so on. These are presented as powerful arguments, they can be very convincing and can sow the seeds of disunity. Some of this falls on deaf ears, or the arguments breakdown when confronted with first-hand experience - like being made redundant and having to sign on yourself.

As revolutionaries who want to see change we cannot leave this to chance, we must counter the crap by all means available. This is not saying that we know all the answers, or we know the score on this, that or the other.

The fact is, if we want to promote change in society we must have some ideas of how the beast works. The



fight back against capitalism is not just on the streets but in the hearts and minds of our class. We have to challenge all the ideas that kill the ability to have a revolution. These ideas are not abstract theories developed in a vacuum, but grass root ideas from our lives and our struggles. They are developed in order to advance the self-determination of our class, but not as ideas for the rest of our class to consume passively. Developing revolutionary ideas within our class is best done by promoting debate as equals.

The trouble with most Lefty revolutionaries has been their self-imposed marginalisation: not relating to people, not debating as equals. Many revolutionaries are so wrapped up in their own theories they cannot see the wood for the trees. People, if given

the opportunity could challenge such ideas, or confirm them, and so make particular ideas or theories relevant.

INVOLVEMENT IN STRUGGLES is when we put our ideas into practice. The working class experience is of class struggle. This can be a strike over wages, or fighting for better services in the community. This can be subversive and reformist.

Class War, being revolutionaries, want to play up the subversive parts of our everyday struggles, and undermine those that have been incorporated into the system, such as the way union leaderships dampen class militancy among rank and file members. Now some struggle may not be directly revolutionary. In fact the majority are not at this moment in time.

But this does not mean that they are not subversive or contributing to the revolution.

The limited victory over the poll tax did not cause a revolution in this country, but in the long-run it's contribution could be enormous. The basic politicisation and self-organisation of many working class people up and down the country, not to mention the more overtly subversive activities like bailiff-bashing and outbreaks of mass public disorder have done wonders.

As a rule anything that promotes **SELF-CONFIDENCE** and **SOLIDARITY** for our class to exercise its power against the ruling class is worth getting involved in. Because we are libertarian revolutionaries, we wish

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persuasion. Hidden agendas are for vanguards not libertarians.

But isn't there a danger of organisations like Class War being a new leadership? We say no, this is fundamental to our existence, our aim is not to exist anymore, to self-destruct, because ideas and politics will have become so widespread that we have simply no need to exist.

Of course influential figures and organisations are thrown up by the working class in struggle, and they do push for certain objectives. This is to be expected and their relationship to the class is central to assessing their value. In short they have to encourage their class to do-it-themselves. A good example from history would be the Ukranian anarchist and insurgent movement 1917-22. The military wing defeated both the Red and the White armies. They did not, as a result, expect to rule and made this clear. Instead they worked closely with the local Soviets on social matters and regarded themselves as the armed wing of the working class and

had enough sense to realise that the social and economic part of the revolution was as important as its military defence. (For more on this see *The History of the Machnovist Movement* by Peter Arshinov).

So does Class War think that it has a unique role to play? Again the answer is no. In the build up to the revolutionary situation there will be more than one organisation. This we take for granted. In fact it is in our tactical interests to encourage similar groups to ours to start and grow.

In revolutionary periods in history all sorts of movements and organisations are thrown up. Some will be good, some will be bad. All sorts of shifting social alliances will be made as the course of the revolution progresses. We must be prepared to hard sell our ideas in this period (and before!) and not just trust to spontaneity to pull us through, as some of the anarchists seem to think. We see the organisations like the Class War Federation as playing a part, with others, in the creation and defence of

a revolutionary movement within the working class. This movement will be a strong and diverse collection of the revolutionary sections of our class under nobody's control but their own. Yet this movement will also have to be politically coherent and it must have a certain minimum of shared ideas.

The Class War Federation is an organised and active voice in our class. We hope to become more and more coherent and relevant as we develop. Our voice is loud because that's the only way it will get heard. There is no point in quietly biding your time and waiting for revolutionary ideas to be taken up by the masses. If people seriously want to change they must seriously work to promote it in our class. Class War exists only to bring about this change, this is the meaning and spirit of why we do what we do, and why we want your help to do it.



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